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Intelligent Intelligence

The adequacy of the nation's intelligence services is again being scrutinized by Congress, as a byproduct of the continuing Cuban crisis. The Inquiry of the Senate Preparedness Subcommittee, headed by Senator John Stennis of Mississippi, coincides by chance with the publication of an article by Allen Dulles, former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, in which Mr. Dulles takes his familiar stand against any further Congressional controls over the agency.

We think—as we have often said before—that Mr. Dulles is mistaken in this stand. The establishment of a carefully selected joint Congressional watchdog committee on intelligence (whose functions would approximate those of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy), would provide important control over activities that are rooted in secrecy and conducted without benefit of the normal restraints and restrictions of democratic government.

Intelligence is a cornerstone upon which effective policy must be built. But intelligence agencies should not, themselves, make policy—or as they have sometimes done in the past. And the power they wield, which derives primarily from secrecy, is so great that it must be effectively monitored.

Such a joint committee should not be limited to supervision of the C.I.A. alone. It should supervise the entire intelligence community for adequacy, effectiveness and abuse. This control is all the more important now, since there are glaring gaps—for which no responsibility has been publicly assumed—in the intelligence picture presented to the nation for last September and early October, when the Russian missile improvement program in Cuba was at its height.

It is particularly important to weigh the effects on American intelligence capabilities of the recent enforced merger in the Pentagon of the three service agencies into a monolithic Defense Intelligence Agency. Senator Stennis's committee will presumably find out whether this merger impaired intelligence collection or, even worse, facilitated the distortion of intelligence by top policy makers so that their evaluation of intelligence would accord with their preconceived policy. A just Congressional committee on intelligence, composed of carefully selected members of both parties and both houses, would provide a continuing examination and control of all intelligence facilities, something that recent history shows is badly needed.

The Berlin Election

West Berlin, that citadel of liberty behind the Iron Curtain, has just held its first Parliamentary election since construction of the Communist wall.

In the face of new Communist threats and terrors, 80 per cent of West Berlin's voters turned out in a remarkable demonstration of unity. They buried the Communist party, legal in West Berlin though not West Germany. The Communists lost one third of their previous slender support and polled only 1.2 per cent of the total vote. A landslide victory was challenged up for the Social Democratic party and its leader, Willy Brandt, who ran for re-election as Mayor and also for renomination as Chancellor of West Germany. He and his party boasted their previous absolute majority to 61.9 per cent and, but for proportional representation, would have made a clean sweep of all 140 seats at stake.

The Socialist victory was won largely at the expense of Christian Adenauer, Christian Democracy, and the Free Democrats, who had joined forces to oppose the

unity, and urge negotiations irrespective of "ideological neutrality" to ease the lot of Berliners on both sides of the wall. Some of his proposals, like his plan for a non-moscow peace conference of all the 26 former enemies of Germany, may be unrealistic. But he is now determined to make his weight felt in Bonn, and there his greater flexibility may help to promote serious East-West negotiations—if the Russians are ready for them.

Cultural Snag in Peking

The "great leap" of 1958-60 brought chaos and depression not only in the economic affairs of Communist China. During the "great leap" the Peking regime approved the simplification of a thousand of the more complicated Chinese ideographs and sponsored an alphabet that, it was assumed, was meant eventually to replace the traditional script. Articles in Chinese mainland journals lately have revealed that the whole reform program was an irrationally and hurriedly done.

The simplification of many of the ancient and graceful characters was so drastic and erratic that masses of readers could only conjecture what they meant from the context of passages. Identifying, moreover, became such a politically approved activity that a "do-it-yourself" spirit swept the country. Everybody began to simplify. Individuals received letters from friends they could not read; post offices accumulated huge stacks of mail with addresses that could not be deciphered. Alphabetization has been largely confined to guiding pronunciation in the lower school grades.

Peking is now trying to sort out the confusion in writing. A high-level committee has been appointed to restudy the whole field of writing reform. Meanwhile, a swing back to traditionalism has occurred. More and more books with the old characters are being reprinted, and for the first time in a century the reading public has turned to the classics. As Japan concluded during the American-induced writing reform fever there after the Pacific war, fraying koto is a sound principle to use when tampering with such a basic cultural tool as the way a people read and write.

The Wilderness Bill—Again

Before the Wilderness Bill, as it is commonly called, comes to a hearing before the Senate Committee on Interior and Indian Affairs on Feb. 25, a few points should be clearly stated.

This measure is not, as its opponents have persistently implied, a Federal land grab. Every acre of land affected by it is now and long has been within the national park system, national forest system or the national wildlife refuge or ranges. Every acre is now under Federal control.

In the national forests, which are in part subject to commercial exploitation, the extra protection given by this measure applies to only about 8 per cent of the total area. The other 92 per cent of the forests would remain open, as now, to what is officially called "multiple use," which includes lumbering, mining and road building.

Those who in the past have said, "We doubt will say again, that this measure is an invasion of private rights" are speaking of the right to exploit for profit certain relatively minor areas of the public domain which these hearings that bill believe should not be exploited but should be left in pristine condition. That is the sub of the matter.

Late in 1961 this measure was approved in the Senate by a vote of 78 to 8. It was held off in the House last year primarily because of the opposition of some Congressional members who claimed that

In The Nation Foreign Affairs

Charge of Republicans Light Brigade

By ARTHUR KROCK
WASHINGTON, Feb. 20

There are at least two aspects of importance in the conduct of foreign policy, as practiced by the Kennedy Administration, which have passed largely unnoticed. One is the position followed by President Kennedy, when a foreign policy is under heavy attack. In past and with varying degrees of subtlety, that the policy was justified and pursued by the Kennedy Administration. The other is in its failure, or lack of success, in doing the fine job of Congressional and public criticism, whatever those critics may be.

There are numerous examples

of this shrewd and judicious maneuver. But only the creation of a few is needed for demonstration.

The position of defending

the administration policy under

attack is, of course,

an old one.

That is, to insist

that it is

right.

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that it is